launched Bal Vivah Virodh Abhiyan and in 2004-05 the Commission has asked the State Governments to take steps to curb child marriages. The Commission is also collaborating with State Governments and State Women Commissions for launching the Bal Vivah Virodh Abhiyan and putting efforts to generate awareness against this social evil.

Foreign lnvestment in higher education

2657. DR. KARAN SINGH:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether present Government are open to allow foreign investment in higher education;

(b) if so, whether Government have had a detailed consultation with all the stake holders before taking any final decision in this regard;

(c) if so, by when a final decision is likely to be taken in this regard;

(d) whether a conference of the State Education Ministers and Secretaries was held in January in Bangalore;

(e) if so, whether this question was also discussed; and

(f) if so, what were the other decisions taken in the conference?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALIASHRAF FATMI): (a) to (f) Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Education, including higher education, is already being allowed under the automatic route, without any sectoral cap, since February, 2000 *vide* Order No. 7(4)/2000-IP dated 11th February, 2000 issued by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion.

In order to consult the State Governments on the subject of regulating admissions and fixation of fee for professional education through self financing private institutions as well as entry of foreign universities in India, a conference of State Ministers of Higher and Technical Education was organised at Bangalore on January 10-11,2005. While, there is no specific directive in this regard, however, in the Conference a broad consensus was arrived at on the need for a Central Legislation in this regard. A draft bill has been prepared for vetting by the concerned Departments and

circulation among various stakeholders including State Governments, to elicit their views for eliminating arbitrariness and malpratices in professional educational institutions. Acommittee of experts has been set up in regard to all issues pertaining to the entry of foreign universities in India.

School drop outs

2658. SHRIMATI JAMANA DEVI BARUPAL:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:
SHRI DATTA MEGHE:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether statistics of a nationwide survey conducted in June and August, 2004 and presented to the Planning Commission by an organization working on elementary education has pointed out that 19 per cent of girls drop out of schools by age of 14 and an average 25 per cent of all school children cannot write a dictated sentence by that age;

(b) if so, whether according to the findings about 29 per cent boys and 33 per cent girls were out of schools in age group of 11 and 14;

(c) if so, what are the other points mentioned in the report; and

(d) to what extent Government have considered the survey report?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALI ASHRAF FATMI): (a) and (b) As per information received from Planning Commission, an organization working in elementary education had made a presentation to it regarding a sample survey on "Rapid Assessment of Learning Outcomes" conducted by it in June-August, 2004, covering 17 States and about 13,500 children. The survey results based on preliminary analysis showed; *inter-alia,* that:—

(i) 25% of children of 11-14 years age group in Government schools, and 14% in private schools, were unable to write a dictated sentence, and

(ii) 8% of the boys and 18% of girls in the age group 11-14 years were out of school.

(c) The report indicated that the "Learning to Read" programme introduced by the organization resulted in significantly enhanced reading levels among children, particularly in remote, tribal and backward areas.

(d) Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme aims to address the concerns